



Love Chevrolet provides opportunity and growth



(l to r) Mark Williamson, Service Director, Love Chevrolet; Nasser Sartip, SCVRD Vocational ACE; and Ben Hoover, General Manager, Love Chevrolet

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"A lot of Voc Rehab clients have become part of our family," says a smiling Mark Williamson, Service Director of Love Chevrolet at Parkridge Drive.

"In the past 15 to 16 years they have hired more than 40 VR clients!" enthuses Nasser Sartip, SCVRD Vocational ACE.

Bradley Green is one of those clients. He had bilateral cholesteatoma, tumors in both ears, when he was five, resulting in moderate to severe hearing loss. Four years ago he was employed as a porter at Love Chevrolet, parking cars for customers and driving the courtesy vehicle. But his real interest was in computers.

Today he is the IT Supervisor for the Love Automotive organization, which includes four dealerships and two insurance agencies.

In between parking cars he took the initiative to see how their computer system was set up and how it could be improved. "I would help my coworkers and make changes to the network. When things started working better and we had less downtime, people started asking how that happened. Word got around that it was me."

"He just kept earning his way up," says Ben Hoover, General Manager of Love Chevrolet. "I'm not sure what he can't do."

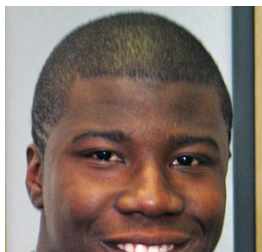


Bradley Green, IT Supervisor, Love Automotive.

Wendell Thurmond was a Swansea High School student interested in working on cars. Working with Wendell's transition counselor, Sartip arranged a job shadow for him at the Cayce Quick Lube location.

"The day before Wendell was graduating I had a call from Mark Williamson," recalls Sartip. "I said, 'Do you remember Wendell? Would you consider hiring him?'"

"I came in on Friday and applied," says Wendell. "I took the test for my [driver's] license on Saturday. On Sunday I went and got a car and on Monday I started work."





*Wendell Thurmond,
Automotive
Technician, Love
Automotive.*

After two weeks of training in Cayce, he moved to the dealership at Parkridge Drive off Harbison Boulevard. That was three years ago.

Francis Looper began working as a receptionist at Saturn of Columbia, a General Motors subsidiary. She soon moved to their business development center where she began handling leads and inquiries received through the Internet.

"Then I moved to Love Chevrolet and covered that location plus Saturn," she says. "People really began shopping on the internet and the next thing

I know, I'm covering the Cayce store!"

Now Frances is the Business Development Manager. She manages Love's two websites and all internet correspondence, assigns customers to salespeople, makes service appointments, and handles online advertising.

"She coaches my entire sales team each morning," adds Hoover. "She has our entire team's utmost respect."

"The way Love gives our clients opportunity for advancement and growth is just unbelievable," says Sartip.

"We have a great relationship with Voc Rehab and especially with Nasser," states Hoover. "Nasser is like one of our family. When we need something we reach out to Nasser to see how we can fill a position. It's been good for Love Chevrolet and our sister stores."



*Francis Looper, Business
Development Manager,
Love Automotive.*

Sartip's goal is not simply finding someone a job. "I want to make sure the employer is happy with who they hire and I want to make sure the client is happy with their job. And so far, in nearly 16 years, I haven't had a client say, 'I don't like my job here.'"

Sartip keeps in regular contact with his clients and is always ready to help them grow and advance in their career. "I want to know how they are doing every day and I want to know what their long term prospects are for growth. I talk to the managers so that I know what I need to do to help somebody."

He's also there to help if a client is having difficulty.

"Nasser will come over and give them advice or guidance," says Hoover. "We're able to retain people and help them grow within the company."

Love also works closely with VR clients to provide accommodations they may need for their job, or to adjust schedules so that a client can keep a recurring medical appointment while maintaining their job.

Many VR clients do job shadows or job tryouts at Quick Lube. It requires a diverse skill set—mechanical, computer and interpersonal skills—because maintenance and oil changes are extremely competitive.

"Job shadows help the client and the business," explains Sartip. "If a client on a tryout decides this [job] is not for them, that's good, because then they don't go into a job where they are set up for failure."

Sartip also wants to know what each client wants out of life. "I ask them, 'Are you ready to go to work physically, mentally, emotionally?'"

"When we get a client from Voc Rehab we know that this is where that person wants to be," states Williamson. "When we have an opening, one of my go-to calls is Nasser. Sometimes I don't even post an ad; I call Nasser first."

"Without a doubt, I wouldn't be where I am without Nasser," states Bradley. "He talked to me about what I wanted to do and stepped up and made it happen. He helped me at a time when I really needed it."

Frances also praises VR's Work Training Centers. She says that she

Frances also praises the Work Training Centers. She says that she needed a lot of "one-on-one" help getting back into the workforce and that the Work Training Center staff "helped me build the skills and stamina I needed to walk into any business." But the most important thing, she emphasizes, is that "you've got to ask for help and be willing to take it."

Sartip says that Bradley, Wendell, Frances and other VR clients each put themselves in the position they are in. "All I did was open the door for you to get a job. After that, everything has been on you. You've made these opportunities for yourself."

"Our confidence is extremely high with Voc Rehab and Nasser and his judgment," adds Hoover. "It's a double-wow. It makes you feel good because things can happen to anybody at anytime. We're not guaranteed or promised anything in this life. And one thing we find true without exception is how much VR clients appreciate opportunity. They give you 100-plus percent. They go the extra mile."

Hoover pauses and smiles. "Frances was out recently for surgery. We had a conference call scheduled with one of our vendor partners and we were just getting started and all of a sudden we hear Frances' voice. She's in the hospital on the conference call. That's one example of her commitment and dedication and how much she cares about making Love Chevrolet successful."

"I'm always here," says Wendell. Last year he was told he was coming up to the limit where he had to take his vacation time or he would lose it. "They said, 'You've not missed one day. You're always on time. You've got two weeks vacation time and you have to use it.'"

He laughs. "I didn't even know. So I was home for two weeks." He laughs again. "I was ready to come back to work."

"I've grown quite fond of this company," says Bradley. "They will bend over backwards for their employees."

As the partnership between Love Chevrolet and SCVRD has grown and strengthened over the years, the positive, far-reaching results for VR clients and Love continue to grow.

"We would endorse the value of this program to anybody," states Hoover. "It's been a blessing to us. My job is to make the people I work with successful. That strengthens our entire team. We've been around since 1961. People before us did their part and gave us an opportunity, and so it's up to us now to do our part. And a lot of it comes from helping our people achieve their goals and their dreams."

Around the state

Steigerwald honored for contributions to Criminal Justice field



Johanne Steigerwald, Oconee-Pickens Office Coordinator, received the Linda J. Allen Community Service Award for her "history of participation in the rehabilitation of offenders and providing significant contributions to the field of community corrections" during the South Carolina Law Enforcement Officers' Association (SCLEOA) Awards Banquet in Myrtle Beach, SC on November 19, 2013.

Pictured with Ms. Steigerwald (center) are Greg Stewart, Oconee County PPP Supervisor, and Amanda Donald, Assistant Supervisor for Pickens County PPP.

Hunter awarded JRT certificate



The Oconee-Pickens Training Center awarded their first Job Readiness Training Certificate of Achievement to client Caroline Hunter. The certificate was presented during the annual Client Christmas Luncheon on December 13. Senator Thomas Alexander and Representative Bill Sandifer were in attendance to congratulate Ms. Hunter on her award.

Pictured (l to r) Caroline Hunter, VR client; Representative Bill Sandifer; Lisa Gillespie, Oconee-Pickens Center Manager; Pamela Smith, Anderson Area Supervisor; and Senator Thomas Alexander.

Lexington Disability Mentoring Day (DMD)





The Lexington Area Office and Work Training Center welcomed 22 transition students to Disability Mentoring Day.

Students toured the VR campus, then participated in career group panels. Panelists provided students with insight on careers such as customer service (BC/BS), stocking (Food Lion), physical therapy (Barbara Jolly, VR), nursing and auto mechanics (Mark Williamson, Love Chevrolet).

Afterwards, students enjoyed speaker Mark Simpson, a senior at Liberty University in Virginia, majoring in religious studies and public speaking. Mark became a VR client after amputation of both of his legs. Students were amazed by his accomplishments and encouraged by his motivation to achieve their goals through whatever adversity they may face in life.

Employers and mentors who participated included Love Chevrolet, Food Lion, Blue Cross/ Blue Shield, Olive Garden and Red Lobster.

Pictured (l to r) Shainna Williams, Felicia McGhee, guest speaker Mark Simpson, Ashley Eaddy, Mila Burgess.

Greenville staff 'Run for Thought'



The Greenville Area Running Team participated in the Run for Thought, a benefit for brain injuries. This was a 5K cross-country run.

Pictured (l to r) Vaneasha Danzy, Jennifer Porth, Jill Danzy, Chris Utsey, Ginny Hughes, and Christine Nemshick-Lauer.

Did you know...

...that the Disability Compendium is an outstanding resource for statistical information about disability in America, including statistics on employment for people with disabilities?

Funded by a grant from the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), the compendium's user friendly tables can be found at www.disabilitycompendium.org

Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

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